



REPLY TO
ATTENTION OF:

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HEADQUARTERS, 3d ARMORED CAVALRY REGIMENT
Ft. Carson, CO 80913



The 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment in Operation Iraqi Freedom III

Initial Operations in South Baghdad

The 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment – consisting of 5,200 Soldiers – initially deployed to the South Baghdad Area of operations in April of 2005 where it conducted operations for almost two months. Saddam Hussein used the fertile farmlands and luxurious riverside mansions of South Baghdad as rewards for top party officials, military officers, secret police, and intelligence agents. After the fall of the regime, the area became one of the most troubled regions in Iraq and a staging area for terrorist operations against Baghdad.

Upon their arrival to South Baghdad, the Regiment conducted reconnaissance and offensive operations to defeat the enemy insurgent network and deny the enemy the ability to disrupt political and economic development in the capitol city of six million people. First (Tiger) Squadron, Third (Thunder) Squadron, and 2nd Battalion, 70th Armor (which was attached to the Regiment), conducted combined reconnaissance and offensive operations with the Iraqi Army's Intervention Force. During Operations Tiger Walk, Bolt Down, and Brush Back, the Regiment captured entire insurgent cells and uncovered stockpiles of munitions. Fourth (Longknife) Squadron, the Regiment's Aviation Squadron, allowed the Regiment to gain and maintain contact with an elusive enemy. The combined air-ground effort denied the enemy freedom of movement and allowed the Regiment to kill or capture eight triggermen responsible for roadside bombs. As a result, attacks along the main supply route (Route Tampa) fell dramatically and the Regiment protected critical areas such as Baghdad International Airport.

As the Regiment began conducting counterinsurgency operations in south Baghdad, Second (Sabre) Squadron responded immediately to new orders and began movement to Western Ninewa Province. The Regimental Support Squadron (Muleskinner), sustained fast paced operations from an immature base while supporting Sabre Squadron's movement to what would become the new Regimental area of operations.

In Mid-May, after severely disrupting the enemy networks between the Tigris and Euphrates River Valleys south of Baghdad, the Regiment undertook a new mission to defeat a highly organized terrorist network in northwest Iraq, centered on the ancient city of Tall' Afar. Thunder Squadron, initially reinforced with the Regiment's Air Defense Battery (Predator), an engineer platoon from the 43rd Engineers (Sappers), the Attack Aviation Troop (Renegade), 3rd Platoon, Dragon Company from Tiger, and Iraqi Army advisors from Tiger, remained in Southern Baghdad to give the Third Infantry Division the combat power it needed to defeat a deeply rooted terrorist network and protect Baghdad from the devastating terror attacks originating from this area.

Movement to Western Ninewa Province

In September of 2004, Iraqi security forces in Tall Afar collapsed, and the town and the region around it became an insurgent training area and staging base. Two months later, terrorists used this area to organize and conduct systematic attacks on Mosul, a city of 2.5 million people. Foreign extremists, combined with local insurgents and criminals under the organization Al Qaeda in Iraq, began a reign of terror that choked the life out of Tall Afar, Biaj, and Avgani while victimizing people throughout the region. Sabre Squadron, along with a small Regimental headquarters command and control group, and a forward logistical element from Muleskinner Squadron led the Regiment to Tall Afar in late April.

The Regiment's area of operations in Western Ninewa Province spanned 33,000 square kilometers and included 278 kilometers of the Syrian/Iraqi border (the Rabiya Port of Entry was particularly critical as the only legal border crossing in Ninewa Province). The population of Western Ninewa is approximately

655,000 with about 200,000 people living in Tall Afar. The Regiment partnered with an Iraqi Border Police Brigade consisting of five battalions positioned in forty-two border forts from the Regiment also partnered with the 3d Iraqi Army Division, a division of three brigades. One Iraqi Army brigade occupied the western area of operations with battalions in Rabiyah, Biaj, and Sinjar, while another brigade operated in Tall Afar, and a third brigade operated from the Al Kisik Military Base in the northern area of operations. The Regiment also partnered with the Iraqi Police across the Province and worked to increase their capabilities and introduce them into communities with little police presence. Special Forces operational detachments and Military Transition Teams proved invaluable in accelerating the Iraqi Army's development. The Regiment rapidly developed close relationships with their Iraqi partners.

Initial Operations in Tall Afar

The Regiment, reinforced with the 2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry immediately challenged the terrorist stronghold in Tall Afar. Throughout the months of May, June, and July, Sabre Squadron developed accurate intelligence through effective reconnaissance operations. The Squadron's ground units conducted raids and engaged in several pitched battles with the enemy that lasted several hours – some of the toughest urban combat seen by American units in Iraq. The enemy countered the advantage of reconnaissance aircraft to ground troops by developing a highly organized air defense network that relied on timely communications and large volumes of small arms and machine gun fire. Enemy actions against the Regiments air assets resulted in damage to 12 aircraft in less than two months of intense fighting. In June, the enemy conducted over 210 attacks in the city of Tall Afar – over 7 per day – which accounted for over ten percent of all attacks in the Iraq theater of Operations. Many of these attacks were aimed at innocent civilians as the enemy attempted to create chaos and foment sectarian violence.

Sabre Squadron, reinforced with a tank company (Dragon) from Tiger Squadron, reacted on the enemy offensive and built positive relationships with the people that led to accurate intelligence. It was

clear that Tall Afar was under the control of Al Qaeda in Iraq. The so-called “Battalion of the One True God” was highly organized into four combat battalions – numbering between 500 – 1000 fighters. The insurgent stronghold was in the Sarai District – a dense network of ancient, multi-story stone buildings, laced with courtyards cross cut with winding narrow alleyways, thus not accessible to armored vehicles. It was clear to the Iraqi Army and Regimental leadership that a large scale, combined offensive with Iraqi Army and police, would wrest the city from insurgent control. The Regiment and the 3d Iraqi Division began planning the operation in early July.

Sabre Squadron set conditions for the operation by improving the local government, beginning the reconstitution of the police, and engaging tribal leaders.

Operation Veterans Forward

In late May, while Thunder Squadron assumed a brigade-sized mission South of Baghdad and Renegade Troop operated temporarily with the 3rd Infantry Division, the Regimental Headquarters, Tiger Squadron, Longknife Squadron, and Muleskinner Squadron joined Sabre Squadron and initiated combat operations across Western Ninewa Province. The Regiment immediately launched Operation Veterans Forward to establish Iraqi Army, Iraqi Police, and Iraqi Border Police across the vast Syrian border region – a region the enemy was using to access external support from Syria.

2nd Squadron, 14th Cavalry returned with Iraqi Army units and Longknife Squadron conducted a zone reconnaissance in the vast Jazeera desert region of Ninewa and Al Anbar Provinces to the north bank of the Euphrates River. The joint operation uncovered weapons caches and killed or captured eight foreign terrorists responsible for the kidnapping and death of the governor of Al Anbar Province.

Tiger Squadron, reinforced with Sapper Company and Predator Battery, established itself in the west operating from bases that spanned over 100 kilometers from the border town of Rabiya to the cities of Sinjar and south to Biaj. By the end of May, Tiger had established permanent security and its main operating base in the town of Sinjar and had secured the critical supply route that follows the ancient Silk

Road from the Syrian border to Tall Afar.

One June 1st, Tiger Liberated the town of Biaj from the terrorists and immediately re-established permanent security with Apache Troop, Iraqi Army, and Police. This successful operation set a precedent for future Regimental counterinsurgency operations across Western Ninewa Province. Tiger then moved north of Sinjar Mountain and established security at the Syrian Border town of Rabiya, where they dismantled passport forging rings and captured other terrorist facilitators. The Regiment helped to establish the border police and severely restricted the enemy's ability to smuggle weapons, terrorists, and suicide bombers into Ninewa Province and Iraq.

In late July and early August, Sabre Squadron, Tiger Squadron, U.S. Army Special Forces, and the Iraqi Army conducted a series of operations to defeat the enemy in Avgani, a small town north of Tall Afar that had served as a terrorist stronghold. An Iraqi Army battalion with US Army Special Forces advisors then established permanent security with an Iraqi Police force built from scratch.

Meanwhile, Longknife Squadron, organized with the newly-formed Quickstrike troop, conducted reconnaissance and security operations in the vast desert in the Southern part of the Regiment's area of Operations and along the Syrian border.

The Regiment could not have conducted these operations without the work of Muleskinner Squadron. Muleskinner moved thousands of tons of building materials, fuel, water, and ammunition across an area covering 22,000 sq kilometers while mechanics, medics, truck drivers and other support troopers worked tirelessly to sustain the Regiment as our troopers pursued the enemy and brought security to the people of the vast desert region.

Operation Restoring Rights

Prior to coalition operations in August, Al Qaeda in Iraq attempted to reinforce their efforts in Tall Afar. A prominent Al Qaeda in Iraq website proclaimed that the "Lions of Tall Afar" would never

surrender their stronghold and that they would repel all coalition and Iraqi Army attempts to regain control of the city. The purpose of Operation Resorting Rights was to defeat the insurgency in Tall Afar so that the enemy could no longer effectively conduct a campaign of intimidation and coercion against the local population, and to destroy the enemy bases of operations they used to stage attacks across Western Ninewa Province and Iraq. The Iraqi Army and the Coalition Forces aimed to separate the enemy from the population and set conditions to allow the Regiment to recruit and reconstitute the police in Tall Afar, which was the first step in introducing rule of law back into Tall Afar.

Shaping operations for Operation Restoring Rights began with area reconnaissance in outlying communities where the Regiment received intelligence that the enemy was transiting back and forth to Tall Afar. Under the advice of the Iraqi Army, the Regiment then established an eight foot high wall around Tall Afar, to control movement in and out of Tall Afar. As the wall was being built, the Regiment then integrated 9 Iraqi Army and Police battalions – over 5,500 Iraqi Soldiers and Police -- into operations in and around Tall Afar. These forces included a battalion from the 2nd Iraqi Army Division from Irbil, an Iraqi Special Forces battalion, a Commando Brigade, and the Mosul Emergency Police Battalion, and five battalions from the 3rd Iraqi Army Division.

As Sabre Squadron conducted operations in Tall Afar, Tiger Squadron conducted reconnaissance from western part of the area of operation moving east towards Tall Afar. Upon arrival to Tall Afar, Tiger conducted a relief in place with Sabre Squadron and assumed control of the Western portion of the city – an area where the enemy had waged a brutal campaign of intimidation and used vacated homes to set-up complex attacks on our forces. Tiger immediately took the fight to the enemy and inflicted heavy losses and prevented them from diverting the Regiment away from their safe haven in Sarai.

Simultaneous to Tiger's Offensive Operations in the West, Sabre Squadron conducted a deliberate attack into Eastern Tall Afar to isolate the enemy's safe haven in Sarai. Insurgents fought to stop the Regiment and the Iraqi Army's advance, but suffered heavy losses at the hands of Sabre Squadron, the Iraqi Army, and the Regiment's attack and reconnaissance aircraft.

While Sabre Squadron isolated the enemy in the Sarai district, the Regiment took measures to evacuate civilians from the neighborhood through a screening site manned by Muleskinner Squadron and the Mosul Emergency Police Battalion. During the course of the evacuation, Tiger Squadron moved southeast towards the Sarai district to further isolate insurgents located in Sarai, while attack aviation, along with precision artillery combined with effective ground reconnaissance and fires, defeated the enemy in detail as they tried to escape.

As coalition forces moved in on the enemy, the Regiment gained key intelligence from civilians who wanted to regain control of the city. Intelligence reports indicated that insurgent leadership and fighters had been so depleted that remaining insurgent leaders had begun to advise their fighters to escape Tall Afar at all costs. In order to seize insurgents as they fled the city, Iraqi Army and Police forces helped the Regiment to identify enemy fighters trying to escape, capturing over 800 enemy fighters.

While the Regiment began to clear enemy homes in the Sarai district, 2-325 Airborne Infantry Regiment from the 82nd Airborne Division (White Falcon) was sent to help strengthen forces already in place. This dismounted infantry battalion gave the Regiment the ability to effectively clear the remainder of the Sarai district and prevent the enemy from regaining a foothold in the area. From 24 August – 23 September, the Regiment killed over 150 enemy fighters.

Thunder Squadron in South Baghdad.

As the bulk of the Regiment fought in Northwest Iraq, Thunder Squadron became the keystone of the Third Infantry Division's counterinsurgency efforts in South Baghdad while they also secured the most critical supply route in the theater. Their aggressive pursuit of this enemy dealt a severe blow to the terror network in this critical area, killing scores of enemy and detaining hundreds – breaking up enemy terror cells.

In addition to all important route security, Thunder Squadron conducted numerous operations against enemy safe havens, leading the Third Infantry Division's efforts in this critical area. The entrenched

enemy in South Baghdad used the complex canal system to hide while planning and staging devastating terror attacks in Baghdad. Thunder Squadron fought through the tough urban and rural area and established key intelligence sources to penetrate the enemy's networks as they also formed partnerships with a newly formed battalion from the Iraqi Army's 6th Division.

While in theater, Thunder Squadron conducted fourteen air assault operations to kill or capture enemy cells and also established Iraqi Army patrol bases to regain control of this region in order to protect the people from the enemy's brutal campaign of intimidation. Their innovative use of air assault tactics, indirect fires, and patrol bases has become the model for the 4th Infantry Division's counterinsurgency efforts in the difficult south Baghdad region.

Securing the Victory in Western Ninewa Province.

The Regiment secured the victory in Tall Afar and across Western Ninewa Province partnering with Iraqi Army, moving into the communities and living among the people, and re-establishing the Iraqi Police that were representative of the ethnic and sectarian balance into the Area of Operations. Immediately following Operation Restoring Rights, the enemy realized they had lost control of the city and responded to their losses with brutal suicide bombings in an attempt to intimidate the population. Tasting Freedom, the people of Tall Afar refused to be intimidated and up to 70% of the population living in Tall Afar voted in the October Referendum. The pall of fear over the city lifted, and the people responded by joining the police force, recruiting over 1765 police for Tall Afar and over 2700 citizens in Western Ninewa for the Iraqi Army. The Regiment, working closely with the local and national Iraqi government, initiated reconstruction of the city, the schools, roads, and the parks. Today, over 95% of Tall Afar enjoys almost twenty hours of electricity each day, while the market places are open and the people genuinely are excited about the future of Tall Afar. As another testament to the revitalization of Tall Afar, over 85% of the population across Western Ninewa Province turned out to vote in December 2005 for their first full term government.

More importantly, Iraqi Security Forces have taken the lead in conducting counterinsurgency operations. Along the border, Iraqi Border Police routinely interdict smugglers with no assistance from Coalition Forces. Iraqi Army and Iraqi Police across the Area of Operations secured polling sites with little or no coalition assistance. In Tall Afar and towns throughout the area of operations, local tips hotlines and a Joint Coordination Centers allowed Iraqi Police to respond instantaneously to reports of insurgent activity. The Iraqi Army took the lead in establishing security across the province and works closely with the Iraqi Border Police and Iraqi Police to provide security for Western Ninewa Province.

Terrorists want Iraq to descend into civil war so terrorist organizations can use this land to plan, organize, and conduct mass murder not only in this region, but against all civilized peoples. Western Ninewa seemed the ideal place to incite ethnic, sectarian, and tribal conflict because it is populated by Kurds, Arabs, Yezidis, and Turkomen who are further sub-divided into Turkomen Shia and Turkomen Sunni. After the Regiment and its Iraqi partners reestablished security for the people, reconciliation began between the city's and the region's various factions. Life returned to Tall Afar and villages across the province. People are no longer afraid. They are cooperating with rapidly improving Iraqi Security Forces. Economic and political development is proceeding: the Regiment's troopers, alongside their Iraqi brothers made a difference in real people's lives across Western Ninewa Province and South Baghdad, helped bring security and freedom to the Iraqi people, and helped secure our own nation and all civilized peoples from terrorists determined to perpetuate hatred and violence.